Tells the Facts and Names the Names

CounterPunch

$2.50

U.S. KILLS 4,000 IRAQI KIDS A MONTH

SEPTEMBER 16-30, 1999 *Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair* **VOL. 6, NO. 16**

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The Minatom Conspiracy

On September 6 Vladimir Slivyak was walking along the sidewalk near his home in downtown Moscow when a black sedan pulled up next to him and two men got out . They told him they were officers with the Moscow Criminal Police (known as the MUR) and that he was under arrest. The men promptly hauled Slivyak into their car, seized his ID papers, informing him he was under investigation for involvement in an act of terrorism.

In this context the cops mentioned the August 31 explosion at the Manezhnaya Palace in Moscow. Now, Slivyak is a leading figure in the Social Ecological Union, Russia's largest environmental group. He's also the founder of Ecodefense, a group that has led the campaign against the Russian nuclear industry — a campaign that has begun to vex plans hatched with the complicity of top national security players here in the US to make Russia the world's dump for nuclear waste.

Slivyak tells CounterPunch that he informed the officers he knew nothing about the Manezhnaya bombing (which has been widely regarded as the work of rebels supporting the secession of Dagestan) and asked them to show him their badges and identification cards. The men from MUR laughed, started the car and began driving around Moscow. One of them began roughing up Slivyak.

The cop sitting in the back seat next to Slivyak identified himself as Lieut. Kosterov, from Department 6 of the MUR. He said he knew all about Slivyak and his role in terrorism, adding that he had a big file on the ties of the Russian environmental groups to terrorism. Kosterov claimed that he was "100 percent sure who planted the August 31 bomb in Moscow", that the bomber was a green and that Slivyak knew him. This same man, said Kosterov, would soon show up at Slivyak's house and that he should call the MUR and point him out to them.

Slivyak told Kosterov he would do no such thing and demanded that the police either take him to the MUR office and fill out a protocol (the equivalent of an arrest report/warrant, as required by Russian law) or let him out. Kosterov snickered, reached his hand down into a black bag and pulled out an ounce of marijuana, which he dangled in front of Slivyak's face,.telling him he could either cooperate or the dope would find its way into Slivyak's backpack. Then, Kosterov said, Slivyak would be "arrested for real", prosecuted under Russia's harsh drug laws and spend the next three years in prison. "Go ahead, arrest me", Slivyak replied, "take me to the office and fill out a protocol."

It was then that Kosterov told Slivyak that the investigation into his environmental activities went beyond the MUR. Indeed, Kosterov said that the MUR was "only doing the dirty work" for the Russian Security Police (FSB), the reincarnation of the KGB.

The recent wave of bombings in Russia (usually credited to separatists or rightwing elements) has been used as a pretext for probes into the activities of environmentalists, who have become one of the strongest forces for political change inside Russia. The FSB has made a particular habit of targeting anti-nuclear activists. On July 2, the FSB charged environmentalist Aleksandr Nikitin with high treason and spying, claiming he divulged state secrets when he co-wrote a 1995 report on radiation hazards in the Russian Northern Fleet. The report was published by the Norwegian anti-nuke group Bellona. It is the eighth time Nikitin has been charged with such crimes. In February, the Russian Supreme Court dismissed previous charges against Nikitin, calling the case against him "inconsistent, vague

(**Minatom,** *continued on page 8*)

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Our Little Secrets

Trust Us

Newt Gingrich's favorite pollster, Frank Luntz, the man who concocted the Contract with America, has just presented Republicans with a new survey on Americans' attitudes toward the environment. Most of the results confirm earlier polling, namely that 80 percent of the voting public wants to maintain or strengthen federal environmental laws. But we found Luntz's most revealing statistic to be this: 66 percent of Republicans don't trust their party to protect the environment; 75 percent of Democrats do. This proves what we've long suspected: Democrats are much more gullible than Republicans.

Gore's Friends and FOE

At least one environmental group has had enough of Al Gore's shtick. On September 17, Friends of the Earth announced its intention to endorse Bill Bradley for president. FOE's executive director Brent Blackwelder said that the endorsement of Bradley was in essence an indictment of Gore's tenure as vice-president, and he itemized a long list of betrayals, including Gore's support of a Czech nuclear reactor, genetically engineered food and efforts to stop the phase-out of methyl bromide. The Gore people were miffed at the slight, but wisely chose not to attack FOE directly. Instead, they recruited the Sierra Club to do it for them.

Although the Club has yet to make an endorsement in the campaign, its political director, Daniel Weiss, leaped to Gore's defense. Weiss told CNN reporter Jonathan Karl that "Al Gore has had a deep and lifelong commitment to the environment. There's no question if elected he will be the most pro-environment president in modern history." Weiss didn't stop there. He went on to disparage Friends of the Earth, characterizing it as a puny, left-wing group with only 20,000 members. Weiss boasted that the Sierra Club has more than 660,000 members. (Friends of the Earth is the group David Brower founded after he was fired as executive director of the Sierra Club.) Weiss wasn't speaking off the cuff. His commentary was backed up by Carl Pope, the group's executive director. "I was very perplexed by Friends of the Earth's decision", Pope said. "I just cannot see enough difference between them to make an endorsement based on their records." (In the mid-1980s, Al Gore wrote an introduction to Pope's book on hazardous waste and there are those who say Pope expects to be named to a top position in a Gore administration.)

The California League of Conservation Voters also rallied to Gore's defense. But by doing so it had to ignore the record disclosed by its own voting ratings on environmental issues. These ratings are carefully calibrated to make it as easy as possible for Democrats to garner a 100 percent rating. Neither candidate comes close. But Bradley's rating is clearly superior. His senate career scores out at about 80 percent, while Gore's congressional career nets a 62 percent.

The Gore campaign, hurting for cash and smarting from the FOE rebuke, has turned to environmental "businesses" for support and cash. Tony Coelho has offered instant access to Gore for at least a $5,000 contribution. Donors are expected to arrive "check in hand". The Gore/green session is slated to take place at the home of former Gore aide and now super-lobbyist Peter Knight. Knight represents a roster of so-called environmental companies (i.e., hazardous waste firms) that do billions in business with the federal government, most notably Fluor-Daniels, which has mismanaged the clean-up of the Hanford nuclear site.

Milk Stooges

Milk has had a rough few years. First, nutritionists have cautioned a diet-crazed culture away from dairy products, warning of accumulation of fat and clogged arteries. Then the unnerving subject of bovine growth hormones, pushed by Monsanto on beleaguered dairy farmers, was met with skepticism by millions of milk drinkers and cheese eaters. To try to rehabilitate milk, the Dairy Council embarked a few years ago on a campaign featuring celebrities with "milk" moustaches. The ads included athletes such as Mark McGuire, Venus and Serena Williams and Patrick Ewing, actors such as Buffy the Vampire Slayer's Sara Michelle Geller, the cartoon character Tommy from the Rugrats and the omnipresent Spike Lee. The thrust is clear: milk is healthy and cool.

In October, the pages of Rolling Stone will feature the trade group's latest creation, an ad featuring an image of Curly (the bald screwball of the Three Stooges) with a smear of milk on his pudgy face, looking dizzy after being rapped on the noggin with a crowbar by the forever uptight Moe. Curly is an odd choice for such an ad and not just because of his girth. Robert Cohen, director of the Dairy Education Board, tells us that Curly (Jerome Lester Horwitz) was a big cheese eater who was so obese that he had to be hospitalized in 1945. A year later he suffered a stroke and his doctors placed him on a strict vegetarian diet. But Curly soon returned to his old eating habits and over the next couple of years suffered retinal hemorrhages, high blood pressure and numerous debilitating strokes. He died in 1952 at the age of 46. "Why", says Cohen, "didn't the dairy industry choose Moe or Larry, who died of old age?"

This isn't the first time the Dairy Council has put its mark on the wrong man. A few years ago, the Council put up a billboard with Bill Clinton wearing a milk moustache. The problem: Clinton is allergic to milk and dairy products. This has in no way distracted Clinton from unwavering loyalty to the chemical milk industry by forcing hormone-saturated milk down the throats of reluctant Europeans.

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Published twice monthly except August, 22 issues a year:
$40 individuals,
$100 institutions,
$30 student/low-income
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CREWCUT FORESTS

When Idaho Senator Steve Symms retired from Congress in 1992, connoisseurs mourned the departure of one regarded by many as the dumbest man in Congress. But there was no reason to fret. Capitol Hill produces a sustained yield of stupidity. That very year Symms' slot was adequately filled by a man from the other side of the Bitterroot Range, Conrad Burns of Montana. Burns, a former meat-packing executive, frequently takes to the well of the senate to sermonize on the dangers of "low-rent welfare guzzlers", "them coloreds", and "commie environmentalists". Last week he seized the senate mike from his buddy Senator Slade Gorton, the Republican from Washington, to lecture his colleagues on the latest developments in forest ecology: "It seems we fight these little fights every year because there are those who completely do not, and I say this in all disrespect, know one whit about what is a renewable resource and how we are to manage it. It seems to me this is the reason a person on his ranch or farm does not run that ranch or farm by a committee. If we did, we would not get a crop in; we would not grow anything, and we sure would not get a crop harvested. I would say the good Lord above does have a sense of humor. If you want to look at what a committee does, I always thought a horse was a camel put together by a committee [sic]. Everything is an afterthought....So according to the misinformation thrown around by the self-proclaimed environmentalists, leaving the land to rot, they believe, is best for the environment; the forests are gone forever whenever they are harvested. I wonder if they think it was all a barren land up here until one Friday we got up and, lo and behold, there was a forest. Just like a bolt of lightning, it was there. When you get a haircut, is that head of hair gone forever? To some it might be. Who knows?"

DAS [GOOD] KAPITAL

Here at CounterPunch we have always viewed the "good capitalism" movement as a fraudulent endeavor whose main function is to entice environmental, social justice and human rights groups into greenwashing corporate villainy. There's no better current proof for this proposition than the line-up for the upcoming national convention of Businesses for Social Responsibility to be held in San Francisco from November 3 to 5. There, in the plush quarters of the Grand Hyatt Hotel, reps from corporations such as Monsanto, Levi Strauss, GM, Chevron and Mitsubishi will palaver comfortably with their supposed watchdogs, such as Greenpeace, the Natural Resources Defense Council, Human Rights Watch and Rainforest Action Network. The theme of the conference is "Profitable Partnerships: Building Relationships That Make a Difference".

The conference includes "35 innovative breakout sessions for CEOs" which feature topics such as "Groundbreaking Environmental Alliances for Record-breaking Returns", "Selling Responsibly to the Wired Child", "Maintaining Employee Mental Health in a 24-Hour Economy" and "On-line Philanthropy". One of the keynote speeches will be given by Tom Delfgaauw. His topic: "People, Planet, and Profits." Delfgaauw is a vice-president of Shell, which has demonstrated vividly in Nigeria its expertise in exploiting people and the planet to generate profits.

Medea Benjamin, the director of Global Exchange (whom CounterPunch readers most recently encountered promoting the "new improved" Nike) is also scheduled to put in an appearance, though not, we feel confident in assuming, to make a citizen's arrest.

GOOD OLD DAYS

Some genteel fellow was questioning Jesse Ventura the other day about the trend towards excessive violence in wrestling and the governor, though he issued a manful defense of the art that made his name, sounded a tad defensive. He has no need to. A couple of hundred years ago one of the popular spectacles in frontier America was a sport known as gouging.

Everything—kicking, biting, kneeing—was allowed. The "gouging"— we quote here from Pictorial History of American Sports, by John Durant and Otto Bettmann, published in 1952, was "performed by grabbing the hair near the temple and scooping the eye out of the socket with the thumbnail". Gougers used to let their thumbnails grow long, for that exclusive purpose. Durant and Bettmann say the sport came from England and was particular esteemed in the South. Peak popularity was reached around 1800, at which time it was apparently not uncommon to see gougers minus an eye or an ear or the tip of their nose. In the end the sport was outlawed. We trust that Senator Brownback of Kansas, who is planning hearings into our supposedly degraded culture will review these ancient pastimes before coming to any impetuous judgements about modern trends.

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We encourage Brownback to examine the role of war in fashioning our culture. Years ago a CounterPunch co-editor was in a Chrysler transmission foundry in Newcastle, Indiana, and got into a conversation with an old foundryman about social decline. He suddenly said, "Do you know where the rot set in?" and promptly answered his own question: "Cost plus, in the Second World War", by which he meant the erosion of conscientious practices in manufacturing by the "cost plus" system permitted by the government war procurement board. No matter how shoddy the work, the manufacturers couldf bill for all costs (at an inflated rate, naturally) and then tack on the profit margin. As Secretary of War Henry Stimson said, "If you are going...to go to war...in a capitalist country, you have to let business make money out of the process or business won't work." Over 70 per cent of all war and civilian contracts went to one hundred of the country's 175,000 manufacturing companies. The nation's manufacturing passed forever into the hands of a few giant corporations.

As always in wars, military theft raged at the War Department after Pearl Harbor. From Wall Street the Pentagon summoned "dollar a year" men, supposedly patriotic businessmen who would use their executive skills to supervise the procurement system and allocate capital goods. They duly dispatched the goods to their own firms, thus positioning themselves favorably for post-war production. The day the war ended, the dollar-a-year men burned their files and returned home. Senator Brownback's investigators could probably locate one of these dollar-a-year men in an old folks' home in Florida or Arizona and haul him in to testify on this important chapter in the degradation of the national culture. **CP**

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Endless Love:

Chronicles of the US-Indonesia Alliance

Moynihan & E. Timor

As with Yugoslavia, so with East Timor: the United States deplores the atrocities that it played a substantial part in creating. The East Timorese have just voted overwhelmingly for independence, thus touching off the mayhem organized by the Indonesian military, itself furious at the prospective nullification of its invasion, which began on December 7, 1975, a few days after President Gerald Ford and his Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, visited Jakarta. The obvious inference that the itinerant American plenipotentiaries gave the go-ahead for Indonesia's onslaught was subsequently buttressed by publication of secret cables from the gallant Secretary of State instructing the US embassy in Jakarta not to involve itself and "to cut down its reporting on Timor". Ninety percent of Indonesia's military equipment derived at that time from the US.

We may assume that the US embassy obeyed Kissinger's commands. Possibly owing to kindred secret briefings, or more likely out of basic instinct, the US press followed suit. As Noam Chomsky puts it in one of his excellent essays on East Timor, "In The New York Times...coverage of Timorese issues had been substantial in 1975, but declined as Indonesia invaded and reduced to zero as atrocities reached their peak with the new equipment provided by the Human Rights Administration [i.e., Jimmy Carter] in 1978. The occasional reports carefully avoided the many Timorese refugees in Portugal and Australia, choosing to rely instead on Indonesian generals, who assured the reader, via the free press, that the Timorese who had been 'forced' into the mountains by Fretilin [i.e., the Timorese independence movement] were fleeing from its 'control' to Indonesian protection."

One man particularly involved in this terrible affair was the darling of New York's liberals, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, then US ambassador to the United Nations. Moynihan's job was to snuff out any organized protest in the UN against the invasion. In a secret cable to Secretary of State Kissinger on January 23, 1976, he cited "considerable progress" in his tactics and crowed that the "US wished things to turn out as they did and worked to bring this about. The Department of State desired that the United Nations prove utterly ineffective in whatever measurers it undertook. This task was given to me, and I carried it forward with no inconsiderable success." Moynihan certainly knew what was happening on the ground, pointing out that the level of East Timorese deaths at the hands of the invaders amounted to "10 percent of the population, almost the proportion of casualties experienced by the Soviet Union during the Second World War." As Chomsky notes, "Moynihan is taking credit for an achievement that he proudly compares to Hitler's in Eastern Europe." He had no shame of course. Three years later Moynihan was the main speaker at a conference of the Committee for United Nations Integrity where he deplored the fact that the organization was "no longer the guardian of social justice, human rights and equality among the nations" because it is "perverted by irrelevant political machinations".

The Elephant's Trunk

Moynihan came to win the approval of the elites in the Johnson era, when he headed a team at the Labor Department which brought enormous comfort to these same elites by producing a report that concluded that the problem of black poverty could not really be addressed by decisive action because its origins could be found within the "tangle of pathology" of the black family. At about the same moment his ultimate boss, LBJ, was giving forceful expression to the realities of international power, in terms shorn of the pretensions habitually employed by intellectuals like Moynihan. The leftish Papandreou regime in Greece was protesting the US decision to establish NATO bases on Cyprus. The Greek ambassador in Washington invoked the Greek parliament as unlikely to accept the US plan. Johnson exploded at the uppity diplomat: "Fuck your parliament and your constitution. America is an elephant, Cyprus is a flea. Greece is a flea. If these two fellows continue itching the elephant, they may get whacked by the elephant's trunk, whacked good. ... If your Prime Minister gives me talk about democracy, parliament and constitution, he, his parliament and his constitution may not last very long." As the ambassador left the room, Johnson shouted after him, "Don't forget to tell old Papawhatshisname what I told you... You hear?"

It was not long before the Greek generals took over, and it was in this same Johnson era, in 1965, that the CIA abetted the coup that brought the Indonesian army to power, killing at least 800,000 leftists (the estimate of a CIA man involved at the time) and setting the stage for the invasion of East Timor a decade later.

"Business is War"

In Indonesia, as in the US, ties between corporations and the military have always been intimate. This relationship has not changed since the retirement of Suharto and the rise of B.J. Habibie. In fact, many of Suharto's generals have simply transferred to the private sector, taking their booty with them. In August, Iman Taufik, one of Indonesia's top tycoons, told the Jakarta Post why he had recruited four generals to work for his new business, PT Dinamika Indera Musa Perdana (DINA). DINA will provide security and intelligence to other businesses in the Asian Pacific. "Business is identical to war," Taufik said. "Since you cannot win a war without the assistance of intelligence services, you cannot do business without the same."

Taufik knows what he is talking about. He was the head of the Indonesian garment manufacturers' association for years. When strikes were called at the sweatshops, Taufik picked up the phone, and army units and security forces were duly deployed. In addition to heading up the garment association, Taufik is the founder of PT Tri Patra Engineering (which has worked for mining and oil companies), PT Guna Nusa Fabricators, is vice-chairman

"Don't forget to tell old Papawhatshisname what I told you... You hear?"

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of the Indonesian chamber of commerce and chairman of the Australia/Indonesia Development Area (which includes East Timor).

Taufik's recruits all have blood on their hands. Gen. Sutjipno was the police chief for south Sumatra and west Java and for years headed the Police Staff College (PTIK), where techniques of interrogation, strike-busting and torture were imparted to the recruits. Gen. Effendi was responsible for strategic planning at the Ministry of Defense and Security during much of the late 80s and 90s. Gen. Bekkar, an Army man, was Effendi's protégé at the defense ministry. And Gen. Emon Rivai Arganata, who serves as president of DINA, designed and led the Indonesian police intelligence unit.

Emon says that DINA is ready to train private security forces for companies that want to maintain their own intelligence units. He also says that "we will have access to information about the political and security situation in the country and this will be available to foreign investors".

Guardians of Pou Chen

The overlaps between Indonesian businesses and the military became horribly clear earlier this month when Jeff Ballinger, head of Press for Change, lead a group of US human rights and labor organizers to Jakarta. Ballinger and his colleagues interviewed workers at the Pou Chen complex, which makes about 10 million pairs of shoes for Nike every year. The labor agreement for the union which represents the 23,000 young workers at the plant had expired and talks on a new contract had reached an impasse over issues such as seniority pay.

There's plenty of money in Nike's accounts these days, but less and less of it is finding its way back to Nike workers in Indonesia. "Nike and its Pou Chen partner have saved $16 million in labor costs since the crash of the rupiah two years ago," Ballinger tells us. "Nike increased its advertising outlays by 46 percent this year, but Pou Chen workers have seen their real wages fall by 30 percent."

As the talks stalled out, the company, fearing a strike, let it be known that it had planted Indonesian military troops inside the factories. Later, workers noticed that several dozen troops had been deployed near the factory gates. This is not the first time that Nike contractors have called in the services of the Indonesian police; however, the strike-busting action does illustrate once again the hollowness of the Fair Labor Association, the sweatshop reform group hatched by Clinton and Nike boss Phil Knight which was supposed to guarantee "free association" for workers at factories controlled by its members. Nike critics point to the case of a worker named Haryanto as a recent symbol of the company's continuing anti-union disposition. Haryanto was fired for organizing workers in an Indonesian Nike shoe factory, shortly after he had lost two of his fingers in an industrial accident.

When Ballinger returned to the states, he issued a press release on these events. Nike, which has been badly bruised by Ballinger in the past, quickly pounced into action, putting up on its website (nikebiz.com) a point-by-point rebuttal of Ballinger's account. As so often happens with this company, the counter-attack blew up in its face. Nike execs were especially peeved at Ballinger's use of the word "troops". The correction notes, "These military security [forces] are not troops. They are positioned around the factory in the event of unpredictable violence/riots".

If you find the difference between "military security" forces and "troops" elusive, Nike says not to worry, that's simply because you are not acquainted with the rigors of everyday life in Indonesia. "Given the recent civil unrest in the country and elections, the stationing of military security at large industrial facilities is not uncommon", the Nike rebuttal assures us. "This maybe [sic] uncommon to Westerners but not to Indonesians, many of whom also want protection and safety from unpredictable elements in a time of political and economic reform in the country."

The ongoing ties between US businesses and the Indonesian military are pervasive. Tim Ryan is a human rights organizer based in Jakarta who encountered an even more conspicuous military presence during the recent strike by workers at a Caltex refinery. Caltex, a joint venture between Chevron and Texaco, is eyeing the lucrative oil fields of the Timor Arch. "When I visited Riau during the Tripatra/Caltex strike in July, security forces were the security and they were well-entrenched in the structure of business", Ryan tells us. "We were constantly followed, harassed at midnight to produce [our] passports, and it was finally Army soldiers that fired on workers with rubber bullets, injuring 14." The Indonesian military is in large measure the creation of the US and Great Britain, which have trained its officers and stockpiled its arsenals since the CIA powerfully assisted in the overthrow of the Sukarno government in 1965. Even after public and congressional sentiment turned against the Suharto kleptocracy in the mid-90s, the US military continued to pour in aid, attack planes and arms. As we reported here two years ago, the Pentagon continued to train Indonesian security troops (the very ones working their butchery in East Timor) through its IMET program well after Congress had supposedly pulled the plug on such operations.

"Nike increased its advertising outlays by 46 percent this year, but Pou Chen workers' real wages fell by 30 percent."

Cohen's Kiss

The Pentagon was by no means acting outside the orders of the Clinton government. We were able to locate a report in the Jakarta Post of a visit to Indonesia in January 1998 by Defense Secretary William Cohen, when Suharto was on his last legs. "Indonesia and the US cannot agree on all issues", Cohen said. "We have differences on human rights but we have learned to work together. I am not here as a financial expert. I am here to talk about security issues, to expand the security relationship." According to the Jakarta Post, Cohen told Gen. Feisal Tanjung that he wanted to resume training of Indonesian security forces and would fight strenuously to get $600,000 for the program approved by Congress.

Later that day Cohen spoke before members of the American Chamber of Commerce in Jakarta. He reassured them that the US military would continue to protect their interests in the region: "If the US were not here, then someone else would have to fill the vacuum; it could be the Chinese, the Japanese, the ASEAN countries, India or Pakistan. Someone else will fill in the gap and it might not necessarily be in ways that are friendly to our interests." **CP**

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How Sanctions Kill 4,000 Iraqi Kids a Month

Albright's Tiny Coffins

Back in 1996, when the number of Iraqi children killed off by sanctions stood at around half a million, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright made her infamous declaration to Lesley Stahl on CBS that "we think the price is worth it". Given such pride in mass murder at the top, it comes as little surprise to learn that the State Department views the truth about the vicious sanctions policy with the same insouciance as their boss regards the lives of Iraqi children, now dying at the rate of four thousand a month.

"Saddam Hussein's Iraq", released by the State Department on September 13, is an effort to persuade an increasingly disgusted world that any and all human misery in Iraq is the sole fault and responsibility of the Beast of Baghdad. The brazen tone of this sorry piece of propaganda can be assessed from the opening summary: "The international community, not the regime of Saddam Hussein, is working to relieve the impact of sanctions on ordinary Iraqis." An examination of how the sanctions system actually works tells a very different story.

Key to US self-justification is the so-called "oil for food" program under which Iraq is allowed to sell oil. The precise fashion in which the US manipulates this program is never set forth in its malign specifics. CounterPunch readers should know the following:

Proceeds from such oil sales are banked in New York (at the Banque National de Paris). Thirty-four percent is skimmed off for disbursement to outside parties with claims on Iraq, such as the Kuwaitis, as well as to meet the costs of the UN effort in Iraq. A further thirteen percent goes to meet the needs of the Kurdish autonomous area in the north.

The effect of alleged US concern over Saddam's weapons programs is to ensure that the fundamental causes of death and misery in Iraq go unrepaired.

Iraqi government agencies, meanwhile, under consultation with the UN mission resident in Baghdad, draw up a list of items they wish to buy. This list can include food, medicine, medical equipment, infrastructure equipment to repair water and sanitation etc., as well as equipment for Iraq's oil industry. UN hq in New York reviews the list, approving or disapproving specific items. Then the Iraqis order the desired goods from suppliers of their choice.

Now comes the most crucial step in the process. Once the Iraqis have actually placed an order, the contract goes for review to the 661 Committee. This is made up of representatives of the fifteen members of the Security Council and is named for Security Council Resolution 661, which originally mandated the sanctions, on August 6 1990. The Committee has the power to approve or disapprove (although the preferred euphemism is to put "on hold") any of the contracts. Approved contracts are then filled by the supplier and shipped to Iraq, where they are inspected on arrival by an agency called Cotecna. When this agency certifies the goods have arrived, the supplier is paid from the oil cash in the bank in New York.

"Since the start of the oil-for-food program", the State Department report declares, "78.1 percent [of the contracts submitted for review to the 661 Committee] have been approved". That means that 21.9 percent of the contracts are denied. It goes without saying that the overwhelming majority of the vetoes are imposed by the US and Britain. "The 448 contracts on hold as of August 1999", the State Department report explains, "include items that can be used to make chemical, biological and nuclear weapons".

No one wants Saddam Hussein to make chemical or nuclear weapons, but it has been abundantly clear since the end of the Gulf War that the US and its British toadies regard the issue of Iraq's mass destruction weapons principally as a means of ensuring that sanctions remain in place forever. For example, a friend of CounterPunch fully conversant in an offi-

Those Foreign Devils

Even as White House drug kingpin Gen. Barry McCaffrey lobbies furiously for billions to be given to Colombia's army and police for "drug interdiction", i.e., counter-insurgency, comes news that the Taleban—joint creation of Pakistani intelligence and the CIA—has presided this year over Afghanistan's largest opium crop ever, affirming that country's supremacy in provisioning heroin and morphine users in the West. Burma's Shan States, where the CIA assisted in opium shipments in an earlier decade, have been left far behind. As Republicans in Congress push for money to go directly to Colombian police chief Jose Serrano for disbursement to cops and death squads, no one brings up the inconvenient memento to America's last sustained intervention in Afghanistan.

As they oversee opium exports to the US and Western Europe, the Taleban's leaders deprecate the dangers of Omar bin Laden, top of the US's Most Wanted. In late July the deputy minister of health, Mohammad Abass, alluding to rumors of a possible attack by the US to seize bin Laden, said that bin Laden is in no position to plot further mayhem: "We have taken his satellite phone and wireless. The poor man is living in Afghanistan. He is in a secluded place and has no contact with the world."

Footnote: Amid the Republicans' effort to depict the Andean zone as a powderkeg of subversion, we espied recently an article by Constantine Menges in the Washington Times, flailing at Venezuela's populist leader, Hugo Chavez, currently trying to restore OPEC to vitality and scheduled to hold an OPEC meeting to which he has invited not only Muammar Q'addaffi but also Saddam Hussein. Back at the start of the 1980s Menges ranked with the late Claire Sterling as a prodigious dispenser of agitprop about Terror Threats. Among the cognoscenti he was known as Menges Khan. An assault by Menges confirm's Chavez's meteoric ascent in the charts as a Foreign Devil.

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cial capacity with the International Atomic Energy Agency's inspection effort in Iraq—the nuclear equivalent of UNSCOM—reports that the IAEA has been prepared for at least two years to declare the Iraqi nuclear program dead but has been successfully pressured not to do so by the US.

UN officials working in Baghdad agree that the root cause of child mortality and other health problems is no longer simply lack of food and medicine but the lack of clean water (freely available in all parts of the country prior to the Gulf War) and of electrical power, which is now running at 30 percent of the pre-bombing level, with consequences for hospitals and water-pumping systems that CounterPunch readers may all too readily imagine. Of the 21.9 percent of contracts vetoed by the 661 Committee, a high proportion are integral to the efforts to repair the water and sewage systems. The Iraqis have submitted contracts worth $236 million in this area, of which $54 millions worth—roughly one quarter of the total value—have been disapproved. "Basically, anything with chemicals or even pumps is liable to get thrown out", one UN official tells CounterPunch. The same trend is apparent in the power supply sector, where around 25 percent of the contracts are on hold—$138 million worth out of $589 million submitted.

The proportions of approved/disapproved contracts do not tell the full story. UN officials refer to the "complementarity issue", meaning that items approved for purchase may be useless without other items that have been disapproved. For example, the Iraqi Ministry of Health has ordered $25 millions worth of dentist chairs, said order being approved by the 661 Committee—except for the compressors, without which the chairs are useless and consequently gathering dust in a Baghdad warehouse.

Albright's minions make great hay out of the vast quantities of medical supplies (including the dentist chairs) sitting in Baghdad warehouses, implying that Saddam is so cruelly indifferent to the suffering of his subjects that he prefers to let them die while stockpiled medicine goes undistributed. "They don't have forklifts," counters one U.N. official involved with the program. "They don't have trucks, they don't have the computers for inventory control, they don't have communications. Medicines and other supplies are not efficiently ordered or distributed. They have dragged their feet on ordering nutritional supplements for mothers and infants, but it's not willful. There is bureaucratic inefficiency, but you have to remember that this is a country where the best and the brightest have been leaving for the past nine years. The civil servants that remain are earning between $2.50 and $10 a month."

The "destruction" by Iraqi troops turned out to be an archeaological dig.

The breakdown of the Iraqi communications system—it can take two days to get a phone call through to Basra from Baghdad—is obviously a fundamental impediment to the health system. The Iraqis have ordered just under $90 million worth of telecommunications equipment, all of which is "on hold"—i.e., vetoed. The excuse of course is that Saddam could use the system to order troops about, notwithstanding the fact that the Iraqi security services have the use of their own cell-phone system, smuggled in last year from China.

In further efforts to lay all responsibility for the misery of ordinary Iraqis at the feet of Saddam alone, the State Department report alleges that "Iraq is actually exporting food, even though it says its people are malnourished". Leaving aside the copiously documented fact that the people of Iraq ARE malnourished, UN officials hotly dispute the notion that food delivered under the oil-for-food program has been diverted to overseas markets. "There is absolutely no evidence for that", says one. "On the other hand, the Iraqis are very rigorous in rejecting sub-standard shipments. You find a lot of stuff such as baby milk, sent from neighboring Arab countries as aid, that in some cases has passed its expiration date when it arrives so they ship it out again."

The Iraqis do not have this recourse for goods shipped under the UN program. Once Cotecna certifies the goods have arrived, whatever their condition, the suppliers get paid. The UN office in Baghdad supported a reasonable proposal to the Security Council that the Iraqis be allowed to withold ten percent of the payment until they have had a chance to inspect the goods. The proposal drew a 661 Committee veto, though not, for once, from the Anglo-Americans but from the French and the Russians, who are both currently doing well out of the Iraq trade.

Seeking out evidence of Saddam's depredations against his own people should be an easy task, but the State Department report opts for fiction over fact when possible. The report featured an aerial reconnaissance picture of "destruction by Iraqi forces of civilian homes in the citadel in Kirkuk". According to Mouayad Saeed al-Damerji, an internationally respected Iraqi archeologist, the picture shows what is in fact an archeological dig at the 4,600-year old citadel, in progress since 1985.

There appears little prospect of change in this miserable situation. Last year, Denis Halliday, the UN coordinator for humanitarian relief in Iraq, quit in protest over a policy that causes "four to five thousand children to die unnecessarily every month due to the impact of sanctions". White House officials expressed their delight that this irksome voice of moral outrage had been removed from the scene, but Hans von Sponek, Halliday's successor, is showing signs of treading the same path, publicly appealing for the end of sanctions.

Friends say he is on the verge of quitting. For Albright, presumably, that will be no less acceptable a price than the thousands of little coffins that will serve as her memorial. **CP**

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and incomprehensible".

The zeroing in on anti-nuke organizers has everything to do with the FSB's intimate ties with Minatom, the Russian nuclear agency. Along with the FSB, Minatom is one of the most powerful and unsupervised agencies in Russia. Russian greens such as Slivyak view Minatom as being "corrupt, violent and unanswerable to anyone". Moreover, at a time when the Russian economy is in a state of free-fall, Minatom may be the one government institution with prospects for a steady flow of revenue. In March, Yuri Adamov, the blustery head of the Russian nuclear agency, announced that Minatom was set to "cash in on the international market in nuclear materials". In other words, Minatom is poised to make Russia the dumping ground for the world's radioactive waste. Adamov estimated that the potential fees for accepting the spent fuel from commercial nuclear reactors in Japan, Switzerland and Korea alone could total $150 billion.

Minatom has an American partner in this scheme, a group with the benign title of the Non-Proliferation Trust. The Trust plans to do much of the initial dirty work for Minatom, such as securing the waste from the utilities, building a nuclear waste armada and constructing storage facilities inside Russia. This outfit is headed up by Daniel Murphy (former deputy director of the CIA), Bruce DeMars (former head of the Navy's nuclear program) and William Webster (former director of the CIA and FBI). Although the Trust is set up as a non-profit corporation, it and its principals stand to make a ton of money from the deal, perhaps as much as $1.2 billion.

They've also spread the slush around to companies with ties to key American politicians. As noted, the plan calls for the building of a fleet of nuclear waste cargo ships, by the Gulfport, Mississippi firm of Halter Marine. Halter Marine is closely linked to Senator Trent Lott. Construction of the storage facilities will be overseen by the Alaska Interstate Construction Company, an Anchorage-based outfit on good terms with Senator Frank Murkowski. The company has handled much of the work at the filthy Prudhoe Bay oil refineries.

NRDC's take may top $20 million, only slightly less than the group's annual budget.

In an attempt to quash criticism by Russian enviros, the Trust brought on board the Natural Resources Defense Council and the head of its nuclear program, Thomas Cochran. In exchange for giving the project green cachet, NRDC will get 10 percent of the money passing through a program set up by the Trust called the Russian Environmental Fund. NRDC's take may top $20 million, a sum only slightly less than the group's annual budget.

The latest round of FSB/MUR attacks on Russian anti-nuke organizers came after greens protested the Minatom/NPT deal before the Duma, where Minatom was seeking to overturn Russian environmental statutes that currently ban the import of foreign nuclear waste. The Minatom plan was defeated by a narrow margin. In the end the MUR officers released Slivyak without getting anything from him. "Finally, after spending 90 to 100 minutes in this car I was released", Slivyak tells us. "They didn't tell me anything. They just said, 'go home'. When I asked them to return my ID papers, they shook their heads and said that I was going to be arrested sooner or later anyway and they'd keep them until then. Then they left."

On September 7, an FSB agent placed a threatening phone call to Slivyak's colleague Alexey Kozlov, who is the chief anti-nuclear organizer for the Social Ecological Union in Voronezh, south of Moscow on the river Don. The FSB agent told Kozlov that he better "get his fucking ass" down to the FSB headquarters for what the agent slyly referred to as "an informal conversation". The agent said he wanted Kozlov to describe the recent protest at the Novovoronezh nuclear plant and the names of the organizers and participants. Kozlov said forget it. Then the FSB man upped the ante, intimating that charges could be brought against him as well. "Your Moscow friends have some problems, I hear. You don't want to experience the same, do you?" Kozlov told the security officers he still wasn't interested. "If that's the way you want it", the agent said, "fine. But if we don't capture the bombers, consider yourself arrested." **CP**

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